Ultimate Guide to Renting Your First Self Storage Unit

Everything You Need to Know About Renting a Self Storage Unit for the First Time
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Choosing the Right Self Storage Unit Near You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Packing &amp; Organizing Your Self Storage Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>How to Move and Store Kitchen Appliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>How to Move and Store a TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How to Move and Store a Mattress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>How to Store Vinyl Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>How to Store CDs, DVDs, Video Games &amp; Other Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tips for Storing Patio Furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Additional Self Storage Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All across the country, people are using self storage units to help prepare for moving day, to get organized, to reduce clutter around the house or to store belongings for the future.

If you haven’t used a self storage unit before, you might have questions about how to find the right solution for you or how to properly move and store your belongings. If so, this guide is just for you!

At ezStorage, we understand your concerns, and that’s why we created this free guide to finding, renting and using a self storage unit for the very first time. Keep reading and you’ll not only learn the difference between the different types of self storage units, but you’ll also get tips and advice for getting the most out of your rental.

Let’s get started!
Renting a self storage unit for the first time isn’t as daunting as it may initially seem. In fact, depending upon the company you choose, it can be quite easy. If you’re prepared with a few questions and you’ve done your research, the rental process can be even smoother.

**STEP 1**

**Determine Which Type of Self Storage Unit You Need**

The first thing you need to know about self storage units is that there are several different types to consider before making your decision. How do you know which type of unit is right for you? Here’s an overview of the most common self storage units and what they’re typically used for:

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**TYPES OF SELF STORAGE UNITS**

**Standard Accessible Storage Units:**
Available in a variety of sizes based on your needs and perfect for storing toys, patio furniture, tools, kitchen utensils and other durable items.

**Climate Controlled Storage Units:**
Available in a variety of sizes and perfect for storing temperature-sensitive items like furniture, media (VHS tapes, CDs, vinyl records, video games) or anything that needs to be protected from extreme heat, cold and humidity.

**Vehicle, RV & Boat Storage Units:**
You guessed it! Vehicle self storage is intended for your cars, motor homes, watercraft and other recreational vehicles like ATVs, snowmobiles and motorcycles.

**Drive-Up Storage Units:**
Sometimes described as a self storage “garage,” some renters prefer this type of unit for immediate drive-up access.
STEP 2

Estimate How Much Storage Space is Right for You

We offer several unit sizes at our various self storage locations, including 5’ x 5’, 5’ x 10’, 7.5’ x 10’, 10’ x 10’, 10’ x 15’, 10’ x 20’ and 10’ x 30’. That’s a range of 25-square-feet to 300-square-feet, providing you with plenty of options for self storage unit sizes. Not sure how much space you need? Check out our storage unit size guide for more information.

STEP 3

Find a Self Storage Location Near You

Now that you understand the different types of self storage solutions available to you, it’s time to find one nearby. Many self storage companies offer a location finder that makes it easy to search for self storage units by zip code or address. When choosing a location, be sure to consider not just where you are now, but where you’ll be in the future – after a move, for example.

STEP 4

Reserve Your Self Storage Unit Online

After you decide on a self storage location, the next step is to reserve the unit online or call the storage facility for help. Availability is often limited, so once you identify a good fit, don’t hesitate in securing your rental. Some self storage companies, like ezStorage, don’t require a deposit, so it’s always better to reserve your unit now and then cancel if you decide you no longer need it. Just be sure to check with the company you’re considering.

STEP 5

Get Ready for Move-In!

Storage facilities usually ask for certain documents at the time of rental including a valid photo ID, current contact information and proof of insurance, so keep that in mind as you prepare for move-in. Now all that’s left to do is to get your stuff ready, which brings us to chapter two of our Ultimate Guide to Renting Your First Self Storage Unit.
Chapter 2: 
Packing & Organizing Your Self Storage Unit

After renting a storage unit, it’s time to make sure that the items you are storing are properly prepared for storage. Following basic packing tips will help keep your items protected while they are in storage and will help ensure everything is the way you left it when you return.

7 Tips for Packing & Organizing Your Stuff

1. **Label Boxes Clearly**: Once a box has been packed and securely sealed with packing tape, make sure that every box is labeled before placing in storage. Create an inventory list based on your box-labeling system.

2. **Disassemble Items**: Take apart bed frames, tables and anything that can be disassembled to help maximize space in your storage unit.

3. **Protect Your Stuff**: While in transit, protect your valuables by using bubble wrap, newspaper or other covers designed for your specific items. Mattress covers and old blankets work great.

4. **Create an Aisle**: When placing items in your storage unit, organize them so there is an aisle down the middle to the back of the storage unit. This will allow you to navigate the space more efficiently.

5. **Utilize Vertical Space**: ezStorage storage units are approximately eight feet (8’) high. So, plan ahead to take advantage of all of your vertical space.

6. **Prioritize Your Placement**: Put large appliances and electronics towards the back, and place frequently needed items toward the front of the storage unit for easy access.

7. **Take a Deep Breath**: Resist the urge to just start throwing things into boxes. Follow these tips, and think through everything you want to store in your unit. Taking your time now will only make life easier for you when it’s time to get your stuff or when you need to find something down the road.

Need Storage Boxes & Containers?

Your local grocery store receives hundreds of cardboard boxes each week and it may be more than happy to give them to you if you ask. Every time you head out for milk, come back with a couple of free boxes. Don’t have time? Check out our selection of [moving boxes and packing supplies](http://www.ezstorage.com).
How to Store Stuff Like a Pro

Tips for Storing TVs, Mattresses, Refrigerators and More!
Chapter 3: How to Move & Store Large Appliances

How to Prepare Your Kitchen Appliances for Moving and Storage

If you are moving appliances to a new home or to a storage unit, it is very important to follow the right steps in order to prepare the appliances for moving, storage or set-up, so they can be easily used in a new home. Before preparing for moving, consult the appliance manufacturer’s manual for specific storage/moving instructions.

Following the right preparation steps will help make moving appliances much easier:

Preparing Your Refrigerator for Moving and Storage

- Drain icemakers and water supply lines and allow them to thoroughly dry. Defrost the refrigerator at least 3 to 5 days before moving.

- Clean all surface areas both inside and outside of the refrigerator. Remove the trays and drawers from the refrigerator and clean with a mild detergent. Dust or vacuum the coils on the back or bottom of the refrigerator.

- Tape the refrigerator and freezer doors shut while in transit. When moving the refrigerator, transport upright covered in a tarp or moving blankets.
Prepping a Dishwasher for Moving and Storage

• Before moving, unplug and thoroughly clean the dishwasher. Let the dishwasher air dry for at least 24 hours before preparing it for moving.

• Disconnect and clean the hoses. Once these are dry, wrap them in towels or newspaper for protection. Place the hoses inside the dishwasher for easy access.

• Leave the dishwasher door open for a little bit of time before moving to let the air circulate inside and out of the appliance.

• Tape cords onto the side of the dishwasher and cover it with a tarp or moving blankets prior to transit.

Packing a Microwave Oven for Moving and Storage

• Remove the glass turntable inside the microwave and thoroughly clean the interior and exterior microwave surfaces.

• The best way to move and store a microwave is in its original packaging. If the original packaging is not available, the microwave can be stored in a very sturdy cardboard box with lots of filler material (newspaper, bubble wrap, or linens) for extra protection.

• If you are not placing the microwave in a box, tape the glass door shut during transport with the cords taped on the side of the appliance. Wrap the appliance in a tarp or moving blanket for added protection during moving.
**Packing a Stove or Range for Moving and Storage**

- Before cleaning, remove any pans from the inside of the stove.

- Clean the stove surfaces both inside and out with the appropriate oven cleaner, range cleaner or mild detergent. Make sure any food debris is removed from the stove.

- If it is a gas stove, have a professional turn off the gas and disengage the piping. Place the piping inside the stove for safe keeping.

- If it is an electrical stove, it can just be unplugged.

- Tape down the knobs on the stove to prevent them from becoming loose in transit. Tape the plug to the side of the appliance and wrap the appliance in a moving blanket prior to transport on a moving dolly.

**Packing a Washer & Dryer for Moving and Storage**

- A week before you need to move the appliance, run a clean rinse to remove any detergent in the washer. For the dryer, remove any debris and lint left over from the last load of laundry.

- Remove the lint traps and other removable parts from the dryer. Wash them using a mild mixture of soap and water.

- Allow the washer and dryer to thoroughly dry after you clean them. Leave the washing machine door open for a few days to ensure it is completely dry.

- Remove the hoses from the wall and place them within the appliances. Also, place electrical wiring inside the appliance so you will not lose them in transit.

- Wrap the washer and dryer in moving blankets prior to transport on a moving dolly.
Chapter 4:
How to Move & Store a TV

The following info will not only make the television moving process a bit easier, but also ensure that you keep your TV safe and secure in transit. Each of these tips are of particular importance if you’re moving a television by yourself without the assistance of professionals.

Tips for Moving a Television

Refer to your television manual and product information that came with your TV to ensure you’re following the proper procedures for your brand, style or model specifically. You’ll also need the following tools: screwdriver, power drill, straps or bungee cords, and potentially others, depending on your current television setup (i.e. wall mounted, on a stand, etc.). From there, you will be ready to begin the moving process by following the best practices highlighted below:

Best Practices for Moving a TV

• **Blankets and Protection.** Make sure to cover your television with a moving blanket or some type of protection that will guard against scrapes, dings or even finger prints. The slightest scratch will take away from your viewing experience, so be sure to cover and protect the screen while moving a TV. You may also want to have traditional packing and moving supplies on hand as well for additional protection that may be required.

• **Moving Straps.** Depending on your television screen size, it may be beneficial to use moving straps while in transit. Even with two people carrying your television, these straps could guard against a slip or stumble that could end the life of your precious television. In some cases, a dolly could also be a worthwhile tool.

• **Keep the TV Upright.** Both while you’re lifting and moving a TV, as well as when you set it down in the moving truck, always keep the television in an upright position. You could damage your television by laying it flat, so don’t do that!
Tips for Storing a Television

Once the television is placed into the moving van, the next step is storage. The tips below highlight the best practices for storing a TV:

Best Practices for Storing a TV

• **Store in Original Box.** Hopefully you kept the original box and packaging your television arrived in. If so, this is something you will want to use when placing your TV in storage. You may need some new bubble wrap or packing tape to refurbish the original box, but be sure to use this when storing a TV.

• **Clean Before Storing.** By referring to the cleaning instructions outlined in your television manual, be sure to clean your TV thoroughly before placing it in storage. This means cleaning it after it comes off the moving van and arrives at the self storage unit.

• **Don’t Lay Flat.** Just as we mentioned during the moving process, you do not want to place your television flat on its back in storage. By doing so, you could severely damage the internal wiring and structure of your television, so make sure this is avoided.

Climate Controlled Storage Options

Temperature is important for many electronics. To combat extreme hot or cold temperatures, a climate controlled unit could be the best choice for your TV. Feel free to contact your self storage facility manager with any questions about how climate controlled storage units could help with your television storage.
Chapter 5:
How to Move & Store a Mattress

Did you know that we spend over one-third of our lives sleeping? That means that our bed and mattresses are some of the most important furniture that we own. Plus, a good bed, mattress and box springs can be a somewhat costly but long-lasting investment. When properly maintained, a good mattress and box springs can last upwards of 10 years!

Tips for Proper Mattress Storage

If you’re getting ready to move and plan on placing your bed set, box springs and mattress in storage for any length of time, there are a few things you should do to prepare in advance to keep them in great condition. Here are 5 tips for proper mattress storage:

1. **Do some prep work.** First, thoroughly clean your mattress by using upholstery cleaner and vacuuming both sides. Take your bed set apart before moving it, keeping all the nuts, screws and miscellaneous pieces in a plastic bag taped to the headboard for safe keeping. Cover the headboard and bedframe with old blankets to protect them from damage during transport.

2. **Invest in a mattress cover.** When you pick up packing supplies, make sure you add a mattress cover to your list of things to purchase. These breathable, plastic covers are made specifically to protect your mattress while it’s in storage. Make sure to secure it with tape and that there are no holes or tears in the cover.

3. **Rent a climate controlled storage unit.** As you’re looking into storage units, consider renting a climate controlled unit to store your mattress. A climate controlled unit will offer better protection from the elements than a non-climate controlled unit.

4. **Lay it flat in storage.** Contrary to popular belief, you should never store a mattress propped up on its side. This can actually damage the coils and other inner materials as they shift over time. You can transport your mattress on its side in the moving truck, but when you place it in your storage unit, lay it on the ground on a tarp or on top of flat furniture.

5. **Keep it free of heavy items.** While in storage, don’t place any heavy items on top of your mattress. This can cause unnecessary wear and tear on the mattress material and damage the springs.
Chapter 6: How to Store Vinyl Records

You’re passionate about your record collection, and you want to make sure it’s stored properly. At ezStorage, we’re just as passionate about providing vinyl enthusiasts with convenient, affordable self storage units for their albums and other music memorabilia.

Tips for Safely Storing Vinyl Records

Start with Fresh, Clean Sleeves

Safely storing vinyl records starts with your sleeves. No, not your shirt sleeves - the inner paper sleeves that protect your records from scuffs and scratches when you slide them in and out of the LP jacket. If you mostly buy brand new vinyl records, you shouldn’t have too much to worry about. But, if you also like to collect used, vintage LPs, you know how nasty those inner sleeves can sometimes get. Ripped, bent, covered in mysterious stains – sound like any of the records in your collection? If so, it’s time to replace them with fresh, clean inner sleeves.

On that note, you have several options to choose from. Look to the right for a quick run-down:

- **Standard Paper Inner Sleeves**: You can find these online or at your local record shop. They’re inexpensive and they come in a variety of shapes and sizes for standard 12” LPs or your 7” singles.

- **Paper / Poly Inner Sleeves**: These guys look like standard paper inner sleeves, but they’re lined with plastic on the inside to reduce surface scuffing. They’re slightly more expensive, but still an affordable option.

- **Archival Quality Inner Sleeves**: These are three-ply, anti-static, premium sleeves (similar to rice paper) and work with both LPs and laser discs. You’ll pay considerably more for them, but they should last longer than standard paper sleeves.
Protect Vinyl LP Jackets

Vinyl LP jackets take a ton of abuse. And, in a sense, that’s their main job. However, keeping your LP jackets in near-mint condition is important if you want to retain the value of your albums. That’s why we recommend using outer plastic sleeves to protect your record jackets when not in use. Outer sleeves can prevent wear and tear from normal handling and can also help reduce an effect called “ring wear.”

Again, these are super affordable and can be purchased in bulk online or from your neighborhood record store. Outer plastic sleeves are also great for keeping dust and debris away from your vinyl, which can help your records sound better and extend the life of your stylus.

Avoid Stacking or Packing Your Records too Tightly

Most vinyl record enthusiasts already know that you should never stack your records for a prolonged period of time. Not only can this accelerate the appearance of ring wear, but it can also lead to irreparable record warping. Instead, stand your records up tall on a shelf or bookcase and avoid packing them in too tightly. As a rule of thumb, if you can’t pull out a single record without disturbing the albums on either side, you’re probably packing them too tightly.

Guard Your Collection Against Heat, Moisture & Humidity

Exposure to extreme heat or even direct sunlight could lead to warping, so be careful where you place your record shelving. Take care to avoid vents, windows or other sources of heat. Humidity and moisture, on the other hand, can cause your LP jackets to swell, bubble and even attract mildew. In other words, don’t put them in your basement, unless you’ve taken steps to ensure a dry environment.

Tip: You don’t want just any self storage unit. You’ll definitely want a climate controlled storage unit that can keep your collection at a constant, vinyl-friendly temperature.
Chapter 7: How to Store CDs, DVDs & Video Games

Unlike MP3s and streaming music services, storing physical media takes up lots of space – especially if you have a large collection. If you find that you’re running out of room for your albums, movies and video games, you can always “thin the herd” and sell the stuff you no longer enjoy. Eventually, though, you may get to a point where you simply don’t have any more content you could possibly bear to part with. That’s when it’s time to find a self storage unit near you.

Self Storage Tips for CDs, DVDs & Video Games

Before you start moving your content, follow these guidelines for packing it up properly:

1. Organize Your Collection. While it could be tempting to start packing your collection into boxes, take a few minutes to get organized first. Separate CDs, DVDs, Blu-rays and video games, then alphabetize each group. This will make finding a particular movie, album or game much easier.

2. Use Quality Boxes or Containers. If you’re storing your movies and albums in their original cases, make sure to put them in sturdy, sealed boxes with plenty of packing material to keep the contents from shifting around during transport. Heavy duty cardboard or plastic containers work well.

3. Carefully Label Each Box. If you have a large collection, it will be difficult to find what you want unless you mark each box with a clear description of what’s inside. This way, when you’re ready to pull some entertainment out of your self storage unit, you’ll be able to quickly find exactly what you want.

4. Choose Climate Controlled Self Storage. Physical media is sensitive to extreme heat, cold and humidity. If you live in a region that experiences seasonal fluctuations in temperature, a climate controlled self storage unit is maybe the way to go.
Chapter 8: How to Store Patio Furniture

When the weather starts to cool and the leaves are beginning to pile up on the ground, it’s time to start preparing and moving outdoor items such as patio furniture into storage for the winter months. If you prepare outdoor chairs and patio furniture properly, then they can easily be set up and used again when the weather warms up.

If you have space in your basement or garage, these are both great places for storing seasonal outdoor items. But if not, renting a self storage unit is an easy, affordable way to protect your outdoor furniture during the off season.

How to Prepare Patio Furniture for Self Storage

Properly preparing patio and outdoor furniture for storage can extend the life of your furnishings. As with any outdoor items, including outdoor grills, make sure to read the manufacturer’s instructions before cleaning and storing. Check out these easy-to-follow steps on how to store patio furniture for the winter months.

STEP 1
Examine the outdoor chairs, tables, cushions and patio umbrella to see if anything is broken or needs to be repaired before going in storage.

STEP 2
Clean your outdoor furniture thoroughly. Start by removing pollen, dirt and crumbs with a dry rag. For hard-to-remove grime, use water or a manufacturer-recommended cleaning solution. Make sure all fabric and cushions are completely dry before you move it into your self storage unit.

STEP 3
Wash wicker, mesh or plastic furniture and wrought iron chairs with a solution of mild dishwashing soap and water. Clean wooden furniture with wood oil soap. After rinsing off the cleaning solution, the furniture must be dried off with a towel or allowed to completely air dry.

STEP 4
Patio umbrellas should be cleaned according to manufacturer’s instructions. The canvas should be cleaned first by brushing off dirt, then clean the surface with warm water and mild soap. The wooden frame can be cleaned with wood polish or wax. Allow everything to dry completely.
Chapter 9: Additional Self Storage Resources

At ezStorage, we’re dedicated to providing our customers with great service, competitive rates and a hassle-free experience. We hope you found this guide to renting self storage helpful, and we invite you to share it with friends and family members who may have similar questions. Of course, it’s impossible to cover every aspect of renting and using a self storage unit in just one guide, so follow the links below to check out additional resources:

- **Find deals, special rates and savings on ezStorage self storage units**
- **Learn more about available storage unit sizes**
- **Find answers to more self storage questions by viewing our collection of how-to videos**
- **Got more questions? We’ve got more answers!**
- **From general storage & moving topics to storage tips for homeowners, businesses & students, there’s an ezStorage article for you!**

Ready to Speak to an ezStorage Representative?

Our team is standing by and ready to help. Call toll-free: **877-GO-STORE**
For Live Chat – visit [www.ezstorage.com](http://www.ezstorage.com)